

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 16, 2009

The Honorable Eric Holder  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Holder:

It has come to our attention that the FBI, in conjunction with law enforcement officers from the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management, began rounding up alleged archeological grave robbers after a two-year undercover investigation. The nineteen Utahns who were arrested are accused of looting a site in the Southwest, desecrating ancient American Indian burials, stealing priceless artifacts and selling them to dealers and collectors who were associated with the alleged network.

While we understand the search and arrest warrants were obtained lawfully, we, along with civic leaders from San Juan County, are extremely concerned by the manner in which these warrants were executed. The execution of these warrants has been characterized by witnesses and the media as "overkill." The perception by the community was that federal agents in raid gear, armed with assault weapons, jumped out of black suburbans and "manhandled" the accused unnecessarily.

While we respect the duties that federal agents carry out on a daily basis, we question the rationale behind an extreme show of force in this type of investigation. The non-violent nature of these offenses, we believe, did not warrant the use of over 100 federal agents surrounding the houses of targets in the investigation.

Sadly, one of the targets of the investigation, a physician, committed suicide. This physician had been a long time provider of medicine in San Juan County, Utah.

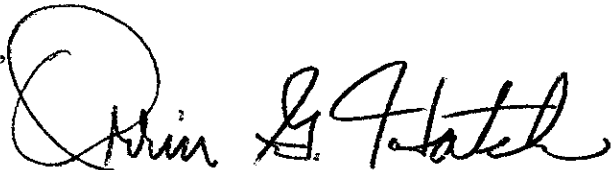
For these reasons we are writing to request your assistance in determining what, if any, factors were used to measure the appropriate level of force and personnel for this operation. The execution of these warrants has brought nothing but alarm to a community that was already distrustful of federal law enforcement.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters.

Sincerely,



Robert F. Bennett  
United States Senator



Orrin G. Hatch  
United States Senator